

# What's So Great About America?

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If your school was like mine, you stepped into an environment completely unique to any you'd ever known. What's an RA and where is the IRC? Why is there orange carpet everywhere and why don't the classrooms have doors? These and other unusual attributes soon became the essential fabrics that wove your new world view.

If your school was like mine, you soon stopped seeing black and white. No, I'm not talking about science, I'm talking about people. How could you be so naïve to judge a person so? Whether you were used to a mono-chromatic scene or a vibrant rainbow, the various hues and shades of your graduating class colored a beautiful portrait of the world you would soon inherit.

If your school was like mine, you probably wondered why you were using calculus in ceramics and applying physics to literature. A focus on mathematics, science, and technology never equated to an absence of other disciplines. In fact, you questioned how you could ever study Shakespeare without exploring Pythagoras. An "integrated" perspective and "discovery-based" method isn't something solely applied to academics, but rather created the paradigm you still use to this day.

If your school was like mine, age was nothing but a number. Is there an age that you are too young or too old to learn? Are you a freshman your first, second, or third year of high school? Just because you are a student does that mean that you are not a teacher or because you are a teacher that you cannot learn? Artificial constraints did not transfer with you to this environment.

If your school was like mine, you often asked, "What's that food?" as the pungent aroma filled the air. You soon discovered that it was an

authentic cuisine prepared by the parents of your fellow students. You quickly fell in love with the multiple festivals, celebrations, and events that represented the diverse cultures of your student body. And as you danced alongside them in traditional dress, you realized just how ignorant your prejudices were.

If your school was like mine, you saw people arrive in Mercedes-Benz and others exhausted from their walk from the bus stop. Some people wore the latest fashions and others wore the cheapest scraps they could find. Being from the other – dare I say, wrong – side of the tracks lost its meaning as you sat together trying to complete problem sets. After all, what does money have to do with intelligence?

If your school was like mine, you wondered to whom are they praying, and maybe even why? Whether it was the shouts of those gathered together or the quiet hum of someone alone in meditation, the evidence of peoples' different beliefs in God were all around – sometimes quite literally. No one persecuted you because of the cross around your neck, the shrine in your room, the bracelet on your wrist or quite frankly, nothing at all.

If your school was like mine, your reach certainly exceeded your grasp. Limits were made to be expanded and boundaries made to be explored. How can anyone tell you how high is too high or how far is too far? Did they also tell you that the world is flat? Well, it may be now, but that's because you and I *made* it so. You looked in the mirror and discovered that the only thing that defines impossible is the same thing that defies it.

If your school was like mine, being a liberal or a conservative wasn't simply just a red or blue

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issue, how could it be? It was clear that no single person, group, or ideology had a monopoly on right and wrong. Being a democrat or a republican didn't matter, but having the freedom to express yourself did.

If your school was like mine, the word "community" was far greater than the sum of its parts: common unity. You learned that the human element is the core of the complex experiment called life. The value and contributions of parents, students, teachers, counselors, coaches, assistants, janitors, etc. bonded to form the energy to overcome any force. Einstein may have written the equation  $E=mc^2$ , but we perfected it to simply you plus I.

If your school was like mine, admission came with a price – not a financial debt, but a moral obligation. Ethical leadership and service was engrained in your heart, your mind and your soul. You understand that great knowledge produces even greater responsibility. Regardless of your endeavor, your profession is serving mankind. You understand that great achievements are not about personal *accomplishment*, they are about personal *responsibility*.

If your school was like mine, then you'd know that we truly are the land of free and home of brave.

If your school was like mine, it was okay to say that we are "one nation under God" and yet okay to say that we are not.

If your school was like mine, you were encouraged to remain indivisible so that you could overcome any obstacle in your way.

If your school was like mine, you exhibited liberty and justice toward all – regardless of sex, race, color, creed, or national origin.

If your school was like mine, you pledged allegiance to something higher than yourself; you swore to serving the greater republic of humanity.

If your school was like mine, then you would have experienced what's so great about America.